

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TO USIA WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7587

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL PERTH

CINCPAC

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USIAC

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

ATMOSPHERICS:

DOMESTIC POLITICS CLAIMED THE ATTENTION OF AUSTRALIA DURING THE WEEK SPOTLIGHTED BY CHARGES THAT OFFICIALS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY SOUGHT OR WERE OFFERED ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDS BY TWO IRAQI OFFICIALS. THE CHARGES INITIALLY AIRED BY THE PRESS AND SUBSEQUENTLY PLAYED ON A MAJOR SCALE BY ALL MEDIA, HAVE ROCKED THE ALP AND CAST CONSIDERABLE DOUBT OVER THE CONTINUED OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM.

EARLIER IN THE WEEK, THE SPECTRE OF CIA WAS RESURRECTED WITH A CALL FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE VILLAGE VOICE CHARGES THAT THE CIA WAS BEHIND THE PLOT TO UNSEAT WHITLAM LAST YEAR AND HAD CONSPIRED WITH GOVERNOR GENERAL SIR JOHN KERR TO DEPOSE WHITLAM LEST HE REVEAL DETAILS OF CIA ACTIVITIES IN AUSTRALIA.

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THIS ALLEGATION WAS FLATLY PUT DOWN BY PRIME MINISTER FRASER

ON THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT WITH THE COMMENT "ABSURD". OTHER U.S. ISSUES IN THE MEDIA WAS THE NIXON VISIT TO PEKING, THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY, PATTY HEARST AND LOCKHEED. NONE OF THESE ISSUES RECEIVED EDITORIAL TREATMENT, ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLE SPACE WAS DEVOTED TO NEWS AND BYLINERS.

PROGRAM:

AMBASSADOR HARGROVE HELD HIS FIRST SCHEDULED PRESS CONFERENCE IN AUSTRALIA AND MET THE MEDIA CRITICS HEADON. HE HELD A WIDE RANGING, ON-THE-RECORD SESSION FOR THE MEDIA WHICH WON HIM GREAT RESPECT FROM SOME OF HIS EARLIER DETRACTORS. HIS SKILLED FOOTWORK, COMBINED WITH FRANKNESS AND CANDOR AUGER WELL FOR FUTURE PRESS RELATIONS. HE HANDLED SUCH PERSISTENT AND PENETRATING QUESTIONS AS CIA ACTIVITIES, U.S. BASES, BILATERAL RELATIONS AND U.S. INVESTMENT WITH A STYLE WHICH BROUGHT THE ADMIRING COMMENT "DEFTLY STONEWALLED" FROM A PERSISTENT CRITIC.

IN SYDNEY, VOLSPKR. PIERRE RINFRET STRONGLY REINFORCED THEMES OF U.S. ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE AT TWO SEMINARS WITH TOP AUSTRALIAN ECONOMIC ANALYSTS, FINANCIAL EDITORS AND BUSINESS MEN. HIS APPEARANCE AT THE AMCHAM WAS LABELLED BY THE DIRECTOR AS BEST TURNOUT IN RECENT YEARS AND MOST PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION IN THE GROUP'S MEMORY. RINFRET ALSO GAVE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS TO FINANCIAL WRITERS FROM TWO MAJOR DAILIES AND A SHORT TV SEGMENT FOR ABC.

PAT ALICE LEMAISTRE ARRIVED AND HAS SETTLED IN. AGENCY DESIGNER ANN KARRAS ALSO APPEARED ON THE SCENE AND IS BUSY WITH COORDINATING AND DESIGN WORK FOR THE NEW PRESS CLUB QUARTERS.
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